

GUIDE TO SUBAREA PLANNING
City of Damascus
June 2007



Somewhere long ago but not so far away, the future started.

Guide to Subarea Planning

The main goals of the Subarea planning process are: to **organize** a way for Subareas of Damascus to plan for their future and make formal recommendations to the city; to **clarify** the opportunities and constraints regarding growth of these areas for a 20 year horizon, as part of the comprehensive planning process; and to **further define** the Subareas, their respective boundaries and relationships to each other and the city as a whole. The term "Damascus Subarea" applies to distinct land areas inside the City's limits, where topography, settlement patterns, road systems and/or natural features provide definition and diverse land uses. The process for planning activity within these Subareas should be generic to all and should consider the following outcomes at appropriate stages of integration:

🏠 **An Organizational Framework** which incorporates the history of human settlement in the Subarea, highlights the challenges of present day life in the Subarea, and records the best estimate of future community and Subarea needs. The framework should be articulated by the City Council through boundary delineation and adoption of Subarea maps with boundaries. Subareas and the process that is applied to create them should be accessible to everyone in the community. Along with this, a communication system can also be evolving that facilitates the evolution of community working groups into official neighborhood organizations.

⚡ **A Preliminary Land Use Plan** with place-specific design elements. While the process may be generic, the resultant preliminary plans should be uniquely cultivated by each Subarea. The first iteration of land use planning in a Subarea should consider the natural elements of the landscape, the history and character of the area, the relative growth scenarios, and appropriate intensity of future uses. Resultant design elements and their subsequent implementing codes will serve as a guide or template for future development (or preservation.)

🗨️ **A Social Context:** The Subarea planning process can reveal significant socio-economic issues or trends in the community. To the degree that these discoveries have a land use, transportation, infrastructure or natural resource implication, they should be fully processed by the Subarea participants as part of comprehensive planning for their area. To the extent these issues are worthy of further community consideration, but not necessarily dependent upon long-range planning, they should be tracked and noted by the Community Coordination Committee.

Getting Started on a Subarea Plan

Among the generic elements that each Subarea will consider are:

- a) Existing land use situations and zoning designations
- b) Future growth projections and expectations
- c) Identification of parks, recreation and open space needs
- d) Resource protection, wildlife corridors and nature's connectivity
- e) View corridors and special places
- f) Role of the neighborhood governance in a new community.

Some Subareas may also ponder topics such as:

- g) Transportation system integration (circulation, connections, travel needs and options)
- h) Housing supply/demand
- i) Other infrastructure: physical or social
- j) Sustainability and 'completeness'
- k) Special implementing ordinances

This approach assumes that one or two Subareas will organize first, after Council has adopted Subarea boundaries and an official map. Other Subareas will follow at some point in the future, as staff resources and community capacity allow. Some Subareas may wish to review current research on neighborhood level planning as a way to begin their efforts. The Portland Metro area and Oregon in general, are widely regarded for their progressive approach to planning and caring for the land through robust citizen involvement. But good ideas come from everywhere. Alternative development approaches and growth management tools may be of interest to communities within Damascus, depending upon their unique character and appetite for the subject.

Guide for Launching a Subarea Planning Process

Step 1: Outreach, Organization and Education

Timing

*Two months
is usually
needed for
targeted
outreach and
working
group
mobilization.*

Earliest:
*Aug. to Oct.
2007*

In this phase the city will undertake to publicize the Subarea planning process throughout Damascus so that people are aware that the effort is beginning and they have access to the process.

Citizens can assert their interest and volunteer to serve on a Community Working Group (CWG) for their Subareas that will be appointed by the City Council. Residency within the Subarea will be a requirement for working group participation and a commitment to deliberate the broader community interests in earnest will be an expectation.

Subarea working groups will review community information, issues and opportunities, clarifying unique priorities and defining boundaries. Their work may form the foundation for developing neighborhood organizations.

Subarea working group meetings will be held in locations that are accessible and meetings will be public.

Step 2: Listening and Learning: Subarea Profiles

Timing

Two months, with monthly meetings, is a typical time frame for the learning and exchange phase of a Subarea planning effort.

Earliest:
Sept. to Nov.
2007

In this step the Subareas' participants will engage in active listening and learning about their area and its relationship to the broader community.

An inventory, focused on specific Subarea information that was collected as a part of the comprehensive planning process, along with draft Comprehensive Plan goals and policies, will be presented and discussed.

Subarea participants will be informed of the land's base characteristics, the way people use it, its regional relevance, and the ways in which growth is likely to happen over time.

Through a SWOT exercise (Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses and Threats) and other creative collaborations like the Sustainability Toolkit and a Community Capacity Assessment, the Subarea participants will begin to form a set of land use recommendations for their area. They may want to engage in "build-out exercises" using colored blocks that indicate the type and intensity of land uses that could evolve in their Subarea. They will discuss and debate the options, as well as the obligations.

Step 3: Preliminary Plan Formulation

Timing

Two months, with monthly meetings and perhaps more, is a typical time frame for the review of Citywide policies of a community planning process.

Earliest:

*Sept. to Dec.
2007*

After formation and preliminary organizational exercises, the most pressing land use questions and policies up for Council deliberation as part of the City's comprehensive planning work will need Subarea review.

This effort should generate recommendations that will be used to achieve the best balance of Subarea needs and general, citywide land use priorities. In this step Subareas or neighborhoods, with the support of a city team, will develop preliminary plans that envision a future place.

Land use apportionments, development intensities, infrastructure needs and natural resource preservation will figure prominently. Housing, open space, parks, employment, education, commercial activity, health, pedestrian access and transportation features will be envisioned and subsequent policies will be formulated.

Community working groups will prioritize future needs and goals, recommending a Preliminary Subarea Plan for their place. Perhaps a more appropriate name for the Subarea also emerges as a part of this effort.

Step 4: Preliminary Plan Refinement and Adoption

Timing

Three to six months, with monthly meetings and perhaps more, is a typical time frame for the placemaking phase of the community planning process.

Earliest:
*Jan. 2008 –
June 2008*

In this step, an overall character and emerging identity of the preliminary Subarea plan will begin to be translated into future development scenarios. Draft ordinances or code language to support both the citywide Comprehensive Plan and a Subarea's preliminary plans can be a starting point for Community Working Group recommendations.

As a Subarea's particular vision comes into focus, its preliminary plan will be shared with the community at large via Council review. The public will have opportunity to comment and critique.

A Community Working Group's work is not anticipated to be completed with its first set of ideas and articulation of needs. There may be a "rest time" between round one of Subarea work, and continuation of deliberation and recommended actions past the year 2008.

After thorough community review and comment, and a "working through" of critical issues and key elements, consensus-based Subarea plans will be presented for adoption by the City Council as ancillary documents to the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Step 5: Ongoing Governance and Informal Feedback

*“It takes
as much
energy
to wish
as it does
to plan”*

~ Eleanor
Roosevelt

At this juncture the preliminary plans for Subareas will largely be complete, and the Community Working Group efforts will have shifted focus or gone into passive mode.

A community planning process is a growth experience, even if little or no change springs forth from it immediately. Some Subareas may stay active in pursuit of future common goals and implementing resources, or simply to maintain a gathering and governance function within their area.

Other Subareas may not have the capacity or the interest for sustained activity as they work through this process. They may choose to simply stay organized and therefore able to react when necessary. Community-building, regardless of its pace or form, is a self-propelled endeavor.

At some point Damascus may wish to explore the viability of local grant programs for its emerging neighborhoods. Other cities in Oregon have successfully implemented these programs to support very diverse, but locally significant neighborhood initiatives and the business of neighborhood governance.

The Outcomes

The **ongoing civic infrastructure** necessary for vibrant, equitable and substantive communication between and among growing neighborhoods, and their city leadership will be further refined as the Subarea planning process evolves. While each Subarea will have a different experience and unique outcome - on the whole, their plans will be comprised of some common parts:

- More fully understood and better defined Subareas (inventories, community identity, district boundaries and functional linkages)
- Linkage to a Comprehensive Plan for the City that is informed by formal Subarea participation
- Subarea plan document and associated maps
- A focused sense of the future for Damascus communities
- Greater degree of community/Subarea engagement and organization

To become involved contact:

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Appendix 1 – Web links to Sample Neighborhood Programs and Association Structures

City of Gresham Neighborhood Guidebook

<http://www.ci.gresham.or.us/departments/ocm/neighborhoods/PDF/guidebook.pdf>

City of Gresham Wilkes East Neighborhood Bylaws

<http://www.wilkeseastna.org/bylaws.htm>

City of Milwaukie Neighborhood Program Webguide

<http://www.cityofmilwaukie.org/nda/nda.html>

City of Milwaukie, Historic Milwaukie NDA Bylaws

<http://www.ci.milwaukie.or.us/nda/historicmilwaukie/hmbylaws.pdf>

City of Oregon City – Neighborhood and Citizen Involvement

<http://www.orcity.org/neighborhood-associations/>

City of Oregon City, McLoughlin Neighborhood Website:

<http://www.mnaoc.org/>

City of Lake Oswego, Citizen Involvement Guidelines

<http://www.ci.oswego.or.us/plan/Neighborhoods/Citizen%20Involvement%20Guidelines%20Final%2004-06-04.pdf>

City of Portland Office of Neighborhoods

<http://www.portlandonline.com/oni/index.cfm?c=25967>